(54) Method and apparatus for ophthalmological surgery.

(57) The invention contemplates use of a scanning laser characterized by ultraviolet radiation to achieve controlled ablative photodecomposition of one or more selected regions of a cornea. Irradiated flux density and exposure time are so controlled as to achieve desired depth of the ablation, which is a local sculpturing step, and the scanning action is coordinated to achieve desired ultimate surface change in the cornea. The scanning may be so controlled as to change the front surface of the cornea from a greater to a lesser spherical curvature, or from a lesser to a greater spherical curvature, thus effecting reduction in a myopic or in a hyperopic condition, without resort to a contact or other corrective auxiliary lens technique, in that the cornea becomes the corrective lens. The scanning may also be so controlled as to reduce astigmatism and to perform the precise incisions of a radial keratotomy. Still further, the scanning may be so controlled as to excise corneal tissue uniformly over a precisely controlled area of the cornea for precision accommodation of a corneal transplant.

FIG. I.

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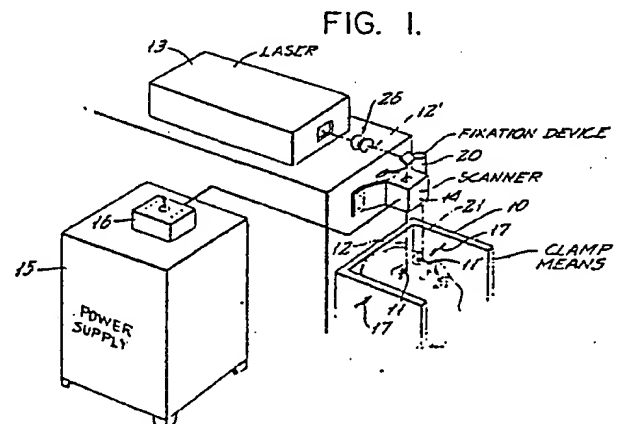
METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR
OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SURGERY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to that aspect of
ophthalmological surgery which is concerned with
operations upon the external surface of the cornea.

5   Operations of the character indicated include
corneal transplants and keratotomies; such operations
have traditionally required skilled manipulation of a
cutting instrument. But, however keen the cutting
edge, the mere entry of the edge into the surface of

10   the cornea necessarily means a wedge-like lateral
pressure against body cells displaced by the entry,
on both sides of the entry. Such lateral pressure is
damaging to several layers of cells on both sides of
the entry, to the extent impairing the ability of the

15   wound to heal, and resulting in the formation of scar
tissue.

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The CO_2 laser has been employed in an effort
to minimize such surgical damage to cells on severed
sides of a given cut, as in the case of operations
to remove a local skin defect. The beam of such a

5   laser is characterized by a particular infrared wave-
length (10.6 microns), and controlled local ablation
or incision of the cornea is achieved, without develop-
ing any lateral pressure upon cells adajcent to the
margins of ablation. However, the operation is not

10   performed without side effects, in that the ablation
or incision is thermally achieved, through photo-
coagulation and/or photovaporization; cells adjacent
the ablated or incised margin are charred. And even
with lasers emitting in the visible spectrum, the effect

15   is still largely thermal in nature. For example, for
visible laser irradiation of the skin at about 532.0
nanometers (0.532 micron), namely, in the pea-green
portion of the visible spectrum, histological examina-
tion reveals evidence-of- cellular dehydration (i.e.,

20   cellular retraction with formation of tissue clefts,
pyknotic nuclei) at energy densities where ablation
can be accomplished; thus, at an energy level needed
for ablation or incision with such radiation, charring
(cellular damage) is observed at the site of the incision

25   and is an indication of substrate heating.

On the other hand, radiation at ultraviolet wave-
lengths is characterized by high photon energy, and this
energy is greatly effective on impact with tissue, in
that molecules of tissue are decomposed on photon impact,

30   resulting in tissue ablation by photodecomposition.

Molecules at the irradiated surface are broken
into smaller volatile fragments without heating
the remaining substrate; the mechanism of the
ablation is photochemical, i.e., the direct break-
ing of intra-molecular bonds. Photothermal and/or
photocoagulation effects are neither characteristic
nor observable in ablations at ultraviolet wavelengths,
and cell damage adjacent the photodecomposed ablation
is insignificant.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the invention to provide an
improved apparatus and technique for surgically
operating upon the outer surface of the cornea.

Another object of the invention is to provide
apparatus and technique for surgically modifying
optical properties of the eye through surgical
procedure on the outer surface of the cornea.

It is a specific object to provide surgical
techniques and apparatus for reducing a myopic,
for reducing a hyperopic, and/or for reducing an
astigmatic condition of an eye.

Another specific object is to provide an
improved surgical technique in performing corneal-
transplant operations.

A still further specific object is to provide
automatic means for safely applying ultraviolet
irradiation in surgical procedures on the cornea.

The invention achieves these objects with
apparatus which effectively fixes the position of
an eye with respect to a scanning laser characterized

by ultraviolet radiation, at an energy level capable
of achieving controlled ablative photodecomposition
of the cornea, namely, of the epithelium, Bowman's
membrane, and stroma levels of the cornea.   Irradiated
5   flux density and exposure time are so controlled as to
achieve desired depth of the ablation, which is a local
sculpturing step, and the scanning action is coordinated
to achieve desired ultimate surface change in the cornea.
The scanning may be so controlled as to change the front
10   surface of the cornea from a greater to a lesser spherical
curvature, or from a lesser to a greater spherical curva-
ture, thus effecting reduction in a myopic or in a hyper-
opic condition, without resort to a contact or other
corrective auxiliary lens technique, in that the cornea
15   becomes the corrective lens.   The scanning may also be
so controlled as to reduce astigmatism, and to perform
the precise incisions of a radial keratotomy.   Still
further, the scanning may be so controlled as to excise
corneal tissue uniformly over a precisely controlled
20   area of the cornea for precision accommodation of a
corneal transplant.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The invention will be illustratively described
in detail, in conjunction with the accompanying drawings,
25   in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram in perspective, to
show the general arrangement of operative components
of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a simplified view in longitudinal section,
30   showing an eye-retaining fixture used with the apparatus
of Fig. 1;

Figs. 3 and 4 are simplified diagrams to illustrate different scan patterns performed with apparatus as in Fig. 1;

Figs. 5 and 6 are simplified sectional views
5   to illustrate different sculptured surface curvatures achieved with either of the scan patterns of Figs. 3 and 4;

Figs. 7 and 8 are views in section, and Fig. 9 is a view in front elevation, to illustrate use of the
10   invention in a corneal transplant operation;

Fig. 10 is a view in front elevation to illustrate use of the invention in a radial keratotomy operation;

Figs. 11 and 12 are, respectively, a view in front elevation and an enlarged half-section-profile diagram
15   to illustrate a Fresnel-cut use of the invention;

Fig. 13 is a schematic diagram to illustrate modified apparatus to generate the scan pattern of Fig. 3; and

Fig. 14 is a similar schematic diagram to
20   illustrate modified apparatus to generate the scan patterns of Fig. 4.

In Fig. 1, clamp means 10 is shown for fixed retention of the head of a patient (reclined, face up) such that the eye 11 to be operated upon is fixedly
25   aligned with a downwardly folded portion 12 of the central axis 12' of beam output from a stationary laser device 13, and scanner means 14 is provided for programmed deflection of laser-beam output, with respect to the central axis 12. The laser device 13 is served
30   by a suitable power supply 15, and the scanner means 14

includes selectively operable control means, symbolized at 16, for determining scan pattern, effective limits of scan action, and, if desired, the time-varying profile of one or more dimensional

5   components of scan action.

Preferably, the clamp means 10 includes means, symbolized at 17, to stabilize the patient's head via opposed engagements at the region of his temples, and an eye-retaining fixture (18, Fig. 3) peripherally

10   engages eye 11 at the corneal-scleral area. Also preferably, an optical-fixation device 20 is adjustably fixed, as to the housing of scanner 14. Illustratively, device 20 includes a sighting reticle and lens, whereby the eye 11' not being operated upon can view the reticle

15   as if at infinity; the sighting alignment 21 for device 20 is parallel to the axis 12, and it will be understood that adjustable means (not shown) may provide an adjustable offset, as needed for accommodation of the patient's interpupilary distance and to adapt to the particular

20   mounted offset of device 20 from axis 12. For an operation on the other eye 11', the eye 11 will be available for similar fixation, in conjunction with another fixation device (not shown) and associated adjustably offsetting means; alternatively, the fixation device 20 may be

25   adjustably mounted at correct offset on the opposite side of scanner 14. For purposes of operating on eye 11', clamp means 10 will have been indexed laterally with respect to laser 13 to the extent aligning axis 12 with the eye (11') then to be operated upon, thereby position-

30   ing eye 11 for use of the fixation device.

The eye-retaining fixture 18 of Fig. 2 is seen
to comprise a hollow annulus, having a convergent
axial-end wall 23 of air-permeable material contoured
to engage and retain the eye via a scleral-corneal

5   region. A side-port connection 24 to a vacuum pump
enables retention of eye engagement to wall 23, and
outward lug or flange means 25 enables rigid aligned
and spaced connection of fixture 18 to laser 13 and
its scanner 14 via means suggested by legend in Fig.

10   2, such means being omitted from Fig. 1 for reasons
of more simplified showing.

       The laser selected for use at 13 preferably emits
in the ultraviolet, namely, at wavelengths of less
than substantially 400 nanometers. Such emissions for

15   gas lasers are characteristically at 351 nm for xenon-
fluoride lasers, 337 nm for nitrogen lasers, 308 nm
for xenon-chloride lasers, 248 nm for krypton-fluoride
lasers, 193 nm for argon fluoride lasers, and 157 nm
for fluorine lasers; and within this range, frequency-

20   doubling techniques applied to other lasers, including
crystal lasers, provide further alternative sources.

       One of the existing commercial excimer-laser pro-
ducts of Lambda Physik GmbH, Gottingen, Germany, for
example their Model EMG 103 operating with argon-

25   fluoride, is satisfactory for use as laser 13; for this
product, maximum energy per pulse is 200 millijoules,
with a pulse-repetition rate of 200 per second, 3×10^5
shots being available from a single charge of the involved
gas, before reducing to 50 percent of specified power at

30   this repetition rate, it being noted that full rated power

is not necessarily required in use of the present

invention. Pulse width is about 15 nanoseconds,

and typical beam dimensions at 25 centimeters

(10 inches) are 10 mm x 22 mm. To bring this down

5   to an illustratively useful rounded-square spot size

of 0.5 mm by 0.5 mm at the eye 11, corrective lens

elements at 26, as of quartz, calcium fluoride, or

magnesium fluoride, will be understood to include a

cylindrical element and a spherical element whereby

10   beam size is reduced while the rectangular section is

compressed to substantially square section.

Figs. 3 and 4 illustrate alternative scan

patterns for having the typical half-millimeter focused

and repetitively pulsed spot of the laser beam course

15   the surface of eye 11 in the performance of a surgical

procedure. The circle 30 in Fig. 3 may illustratively

be of 6-mm diameter at the cornea, and centered on the

axis of eye 11. The scan action is rectilineal, in-

volving plural horizontal line scans with progressive

20   vertical displacement to cover the field, here shown

limited to the circle 30. For this purpose, a suitable

scanner, known as "Microscan 771", is commercially avail-

able from Laser Industries International, Hendon, England

and therefore need not be here described in detail. It

25   suffices to say that the control means 16 associated with

such a scanner includes a microprocessor with memory for

delineated boundary limits of scan, such as the limiting

circle 30. The delineation can be to the surgeon's

desired boundary contours, and the scan speed and direction

30   may be programmed or manually controlled. What has been

said as to Fig. 3 also applies to Fig. 4, except
that a spiral course of scan, i.e., rotary sweeps
at progressively changing radius, is involved in
each coverage of the delineated field 30'.

5   It is a feature of the invention that the
programming of scan action be such that predetermined
depth of ultraviolet laser incision be made to
effectively recharacterize the external contour of
the cornea within the entire predetermined field

10   boundary (e.g., 30, 30'). This is done by progres-
sive precise photodecomposition of the corneal tissue,
as to a depth limit of 0.35 mm. In the illustrative
argon-fluoride laser referenced above, a precise volume
of tissue (e.g., 14 microns deep) may be excised for

15   each laser pulse or shot, and the half-millimeter spot,
repeated at 200/second, can cover the entire area within
the delineated boundary 30, in about fifteen seconds.

      For the situation depicted in Fig. 5, the dashed
line 31 represents the ultimate curvature to which the

20   external surface of a cornea 32 may be modified to
achieve a change in optical properties of the involved
eye, here illustratively a myopic eye, for which the
reduced curvature 31 offers a diopter-reducing correc-
tive effect, all without resort to the use of a spectacle

25   lens or a contact lens to achieve the result. To achieve
the curve 31, the minimum desired photodecomposition is
at the outer boundary 30, and the maximum is at the center.
This is achievable by programming the microprocessor to
progressively reduce the radius of the boundary circle 30

30   (i.e., progressively reduce the area of scanned field),

for successive scans of the reducing field. If the
curvature 31 requires a maximum depth of 0.35 mm of
cornea removal at the center, this means that the
central region of the cornea (i.e., the last and most

5   reduced scanned field) will have been scanned twenty-
five times, and that cornea removal outside this most
reduced scanned field will have involved lesser numbers
of scans, the progression having been predetermined to
achieve the desired ultimate curvature 30 over the area

10   31.

What has been said as to the scan technique of
Fig. 3 to achieve curvature 31 applies equally for
use of the spiral scan of Fig. 4, the field 30' again
being programmed for automatic reduction as necessary

15   to provide maximum cornea removal at the center, and
minimum at outer limits of the circular boundary.

What has been said as to programming to achieve
lesser curvature in the outer surface of the cornea
(Fig. 5), to reduce a myopic condition, applies also

20   to Fig. 6 for reduction of a hyperopic condition.
In Fig. 6, the difference lies in programming field
scans so as to initiate and progressively enlarge a
central area which defines the inner limit of field
scanned. Thus, except for perhaps one field scan

25   involving cornea removal over the entire area bounded
by circle 30 (30'), all remaining field-scanned areas
are annular, with progressively increasing inner radius
of each successively scanned annular field. The last
such "field" will necessarily be virtually a circular

30   line at the diameter of circle 30 (30'), along which

circular line the depth of surgical excision will
have been greatest, as indicated by dashed line 33
in the cornea 34 of Fig. 6.

Quite aside from the variable-depth character
5   of the removal of corneal tissue (Figs. 5 and 6),
the invention also lends itself to uniform-depth
removals, over the entire area of a multiply-scanned
constant field. In Figs. 7 and 9, the cornea of an
eye 11 is subjected to a succession of scans of
10   (i.e., within) a constant predetermined field area
35. In the illustrative laser case, with excision
to a depth of 14 microns for each pulse, a uniform
depth of 0.35 mm is achieved by 25 scans of the
total area 34, to produce a carved base or floor
15   curvature 36 for reception and location of a corneal
transplant.

Further with respect to a corneal-transplant
procedure, the described apparatus will be seen to
be further useful, as in preparation of the corneal
20   insert to be implanted at and within the recess 36.
A donated eye may be reversibly held to a fixture
as described at 18 in Fig. 2; by "reversible" it is
meant that, depending upon the manner of mounting
flange 25, either the epithelium or the endothelium
25   of the donated eye may be mounted for upward exposure
to the laser beam 12, it being understood that for the
latter situation with the donated eye, iris and other
regions not needed for corneal-scleral mounting and
for corneal operation will have been initially removed.
30   A preferred procedure is first to so expose to laser

scanning the concave inner side of the donated

cornea; such scanning is to an extent (achieved

by multiple scans of a full circular field exceed-

ing the diameter of recess 36) sufficient to

5   remove tissue at least to a uniform depth within

the stroma, whereupon the mounting of fixture 18

(and its partially machined corneal workpiece) is

reversed, to expose to laser scanning the convex

outer side of the donated cornea. Scanning the

10   outer side consists of two steps: first, multiple

scans of the full circular field (exceeding the

diameter of recess 36), thereby excising at least

the epithelium and to a depth which preferably·

achieves a transplant thickness T_1 exceeding the

15   depth T_2 of recess 36; second, scanner 14 is operated

in a line-cutting mode wherein successive laser pulses

sequentially advance along the circumference of a

circle designed for precise acceptance in the circular

recess 36, until full severance of the circular cut-out,

20   which then becomes the prepared transplant. Upon

implanting, donated stroma is placed in full endothelium-

free contact with the patient's prepared stroma, and

the implant may be sutured. Later, upon removal of

sutures, the outer surface of the eye 11 and its trans-

25   plant 27 will have the appearance shown in Fig. 8,

wherein the transplant projects beyond adjacent areas

of the patient's cornea, and this projecting surface

of the transplant may be reduced by laser scanning to

a finish contour 28 of preferably flush marginal con-

30   formance with non-sculptured adjacent tissue of the

patient's eye. It will be further understood that, subject to the surgeon's decision, such a finishing cut may be to a curvature which does or does not effect a predetermined change in optical performance
5   of the eye.

Fig. 10 illustrates a modified use of the described apparatus, as for developing the plural angularly spaced radial cuts 37 involved in a radial keratotomy, all within a predefined circular limit
10   38. Depending upon the severity of the condition which calls for a kerototomy procedure, the depth of radial cuts 37 may exceed the 0.35 mm depth illustratively given for Figs. 5 to 8.

Certain myopic and hyperopic conditions may
15   be so severe that to produce merely an excised single surface 31 or 33 could involve, in the surgeon's considered judgment, an excessive removal of tissue, at the involved region of necessarily deepest cut. For such a situation, the invention offers the option
20   of programming successive scans in a manner to create a Fresnel-type stepped development of the desired ultimate curvature. Such a situation and procedure are illustrated in Figs. 11 and 12, wherein an ultimately reduced-curvature surface 31 of Fig. 5
25   (dashed line 41 in Fig. 12) is achieved in annular increments within the field area bounded at 30. In the outer one of these annuli (42), the curvature and depth of cut are precisely as would have applied to generate the continuous curve 41
30   (i.e., without Fresnel steps). But the intermediate

annular area 43 effectively achieves a continuation
of curve 41 with much less volume of corneal excision.
Finally, the inner circular area 44 effectively com-
pletes curve 41, with minimal removal of corneal tissue.

5   The removal of tissue at the center is denoted
Δ_{44} for the Fresnel cut 44 of Figs. 11 and 12 and,
comparatively, is but a small fraction of the maximum
removal depth Δ_{41} which would be needed to achieve
the same optical correction with the smoothly developed
10   corrected single-curvature surface 41. It will be
understood that for a Fresnel-type cut as illustrated
in Fig. 12, the previously described illustrative half-
millimeter spot size will be incapable of achieving the
desired result, for the one-millimeter radial increments
15   shown in Fig. 12. To produce the requisite resolution
for characterizing increments of curvature 41 at 42, 43,
44, it is necessary to employ a smaller spot size. For
the indicated Lambda Physik equipment, spot-size reduction
is feasible via means 26 as far as to produce a 30-micron
20   spot size, if necessary; with this capability, it is seen
that the one-millimeter radius increments of annulus 42
and annulus 43 are each achievable with a resolution of
about 35 radial steps per increment (42 or 43). It will
thus be understood that numbers given above are for pur-
25   poses of more simplified illustration of this and the
other aspects of the present invention.

      Figs. 13 and 14 serve to illustrate that scanner
action may be achieved by means other than the reflec-
tive techniques of the Laser Industries device mentioned
30   above. In Figs. 13 and 14, the deflection of beam 12 for

scanning purposes is via transverse magnetic fields,
in the manner of a deflection yoke for a cathode-ray
tube. In Fig. 13, the yoke 50 is annular and is
mounted for rotation about beam 12, as by a manually

5   adjusted edge drive 51, with suitable means 52 to
indicate the currently operative extent of angular
adjustment. Yoke 50 carries orthogonally related
deflection-coil systems 53-54 which receive signals
from suitably synchronized X-axis and Y-axis sources

10   55-56, for rectilineally scanned deflection of beam
12 at the eye 11; legends identify envelope-limiting
means associated with the deflection-signal generators
and coordination with enable/disable functions of the
laser whereby the laser beam is only operatively

15   scanned over the desired limited area of the cornea
(e.g. area 30). It is a feature of the invention that
by suitably programming the rate of scan of one of
these scan axes, for example, the X or line-scan
deflection axis, the rate can be relatively slow at

20   outer limits and relatively fast in regions between
outer limits of each scan (all as suggested by X-rate
profile means 57), with the result that the greater
density of pulsed-laser shots will impact the latter
regions, while the Y-axis component of scan development

25   remains steady; alternatively, the Y-axis component may be
under a varying rate control (58) while the X-axis sweeps
are linear. The result is to develop an astigmatic cur-
vature of cylindrical nature, which may be oriented
according to the preset angular direction set at 52. The

30   prospect is thus to effect astigmatic correction in a
given eye 11, without resort to an artifical element
such as a lens.

The magnetic deflection system of Fig. 14 also employs a rotatable yoke 60, but the employment is to develop a polar-coordinate scan pattern, or to develop the spiral-type pattern referred to in

5 connection with Fig. 4. More particularly, a single radial-deflection coil system 61 is served by a radius-scan sweep-signal generator 62, and rotary sweep is via a motor 63 having edge-drive connection to yoke 60. A polar raster generator 64 coordinates the

10 speed of motor 63 with sweep cycles of generator 62. And the specific spiral scan of Fig. 4 is achieved by making the radial sweep cycle of generator 62 so slow with respect to rotation of yoke 60 that plural rotations are involved for each radial sweep. On the

15 other hand, for slow rotation of yoke 60 and many radial sweeps for each such rotation, a polar scan is developed for the delineated field. If the signal output of generator 62 is sufficient to cause a full diameter of sweep for each sweep cycle, the central region of the

20 field will receive the greatest density of shots and will therefore be subjected to maximum excision; the field will therefore be covered once for each half revolution of yoke 60. The result of such shot-density distribution is to approach the requirement for curvature

25 reduction, as discussed in connection with Fig. 6, and it will be understood that rate-profiling control of the radius-scan signals at 62 offers further latitude in the development of ultimate curvature upon completion of

29 scanning.

CLAIMS:

1. Sculpture apparatus for operation upon
the external surface of the cornea of an eye of a
patient, comprising laser means having a chassis
and producing an output beam in the ultraviolet
5 portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, scan-
deflection means positioned for deflection of said
beam, and body-engageable means for steadying one eye
of the patient with respect to said chassis and with
a corneal portion of said one eye within a field
10 traversed by scan deflection of said beam.

2. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1,
and eye-fixation means fixed with respect to said
chassis and aligned for observation through the
other eye of the patient.

3. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein said laser means is an excimer laser operative
with a gas selected from the group comprising fluorine,
argon fluoride, krypton fluoride, xenon chloride, and
5 xenon fluoride.

4. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein said laser means produces an output beam
characterized by a wavelength not substantially
exceeding 400 nm.

5. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1,
in which said scan-deflection means comprises mechani-
cally displaceable optical components, and means for
displacing the same to effect a predetermined deflection
of said beam.

6. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1, in
which said scan-deflection means includes an electro-
magnetic deflection yoke, and deflection-signal
generator means connected to excite said yoke for
effecting a predetermined displacing of said beam.

7. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 6, in
which said yoke is annular and is mounted for rotation
about said beam, said yoke being connected for excitation
to generate radial deflection of said beam.

8. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 6, in
which said deflection yoke includes two defection
systems which are individually operative to effect
orthogonally related components of beam deflection.

9. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 8, in
which said yoke is annular and is mounted for rotation
about said beam, said yoke being connected for separate
excitation of the respective deflection systems, and
the excitation of at least one of said deflection systems
being characterized by varying amplitude which is a non-
linear function of time.

10. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1, in which said laser means includes a means for reducing its beam size at the eye of the patient to a spot size in the range 30 microns to 0.5mm.

11. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1, in which said body-engageable means includes a circumferentially continuous hollow annular ring which is air-permeable at one axial side, said side being

5   contoured for adaptation to the corneal-scleral region of an eye, and an external connection port to the hollow of said ring for external air-evacuating

8   connection of the same.

12. As an article of manufacture in aid of corneal surgery, a circumferentially continuous hollow annular ring which is air-permeable at one axial side, said side being contoured for adaptation

5   to the corneal-scleral region of an eye, and an external connection port to the hollow of said ring for external air-evacuating connection of the same.

13. Sculpture apparatus according to claim 1, in which said scan-deflection means is radially operative with respect to the direction of beam travel to said one eye, said scan-deflection means

5   including further means for rotating the direction in which the radial deflection is operative.

0151869

14. The method of using the apparatus of
claim 13, in which said further means is activated
in periodic steps of predetermined angular indexing
while deactivating said output beam, and in which
5   said output beam is activated during periods of
radial-scan action, said periods being between
successive angular indexing operations, and beam
exposure being limited to assure ablative photo-
decomposition to the extent of only partial
10   penetration of the cornea, whereby to perform a
radial keratotomy on the cornea.

15. The method of using the apparatus of
claim 13, in which said further means is continuously
operative in the course of a given radial-scan operation,
whereby to develop a spirally sequenced course of beam
5   incidence on the cornea, and beam exposure being limited
to assure ablative photodecomposition to the extent of
only partial penetration of the cornea.

16. Apparatus according to claim 1, in which said
scan-deflection means includes means for selectively
varying the scanned area of the field.

17. The method of using the apparatus of claim 16,
which comprises scanning successive concentric fields
of successively varied area in the course of operation
upon a single cornea, whereby cornea curvature is re-
5   characterized.

0151869

18. The method of using the apparatus of
claim 1, in which said scan-deflection means
includes means limiting the field of scan action
at the cornea to a predetermined fraction of and
5 configuration within the external area of the
cornea, and limiting beam exposure to assure
ablative photodecomposition only within said
8 configuration.

19. The method of claim 18, in which beam-
exposure flux within said configuration is
substantially uniform and is to a penetration
depth which is but a fraction of corneal thickness,
5 whereby a recess may be carved for acceptance of a
corneal transplant conforming to said configuration.

20. The method of claim 18, in which total
beam-exposure flux within said configuration is
to a greater extent at the optical center of the
cornea and decreases smoothly in the radial direction
5 of the perimeter of said configuration, whereby a
myopia-correcting new curvature is imparted to the
cornea within said configuration.

21. The method of claim 18, in which total
beam-exposure flux within said configuration is to
a minimum extent at the optical center of the cornea
and increases smoothly in the radial direction of the
5 perimeter of said configuration, whereby a hyperopia-
correcting new curvature is imparted to the cornea
within said configuration.

22. The method of claim 20, in which said
means limiting the field of scan action has provision
for sequencing a succession of stepped concentric
annular increments of said field, and in which beam-

5   exposure flux within said increments is essentially
only to the extent needed to complete the fraction
of the myopia-correcting new curvature as the same
may be required within the applicable increment,
whereby a Fresnel-characterized myopia-correcting

10   change is effected in the cornea.

23. The method of claim 21, in which said
means limiting the field of scan action has provision
for sequencing a succession of stepped concentric
annular increments of said field, and in which beam-

5   exposure flux within said increments is essentially
only to the extent needed to complete the fraction
of the hyperopia-correcting new curvature as the
same may be required within the applicable increment,
whereby a Fresnel-characterized hyperopia-correcting

10   change is effected in the cornea.

24. The method of using a scan-deflectable
pulsed ultraviolet laser beam to selectively ablate
the external surface of a cornea, which comprises
focusing the laser beam to an elemental spot size

5   which is but a small fraction of the area of the
cornea to be subjected to ablation, adjusting the
beam-exposure flux per pulse to a level at which
resultant corneal-tissue ablation per pulse is to
an ascertained elemental depth which is but a fraction

10   of desired maximum ablation into the stroma region of

the cornea, and scanning said area in a pattern
to impact the cornea with greatest density of pulses
per unit area at the optical center and with pulse
density decreasing smoothly with increasing radius
15   to the perimeter of said area, whereby a myopia-
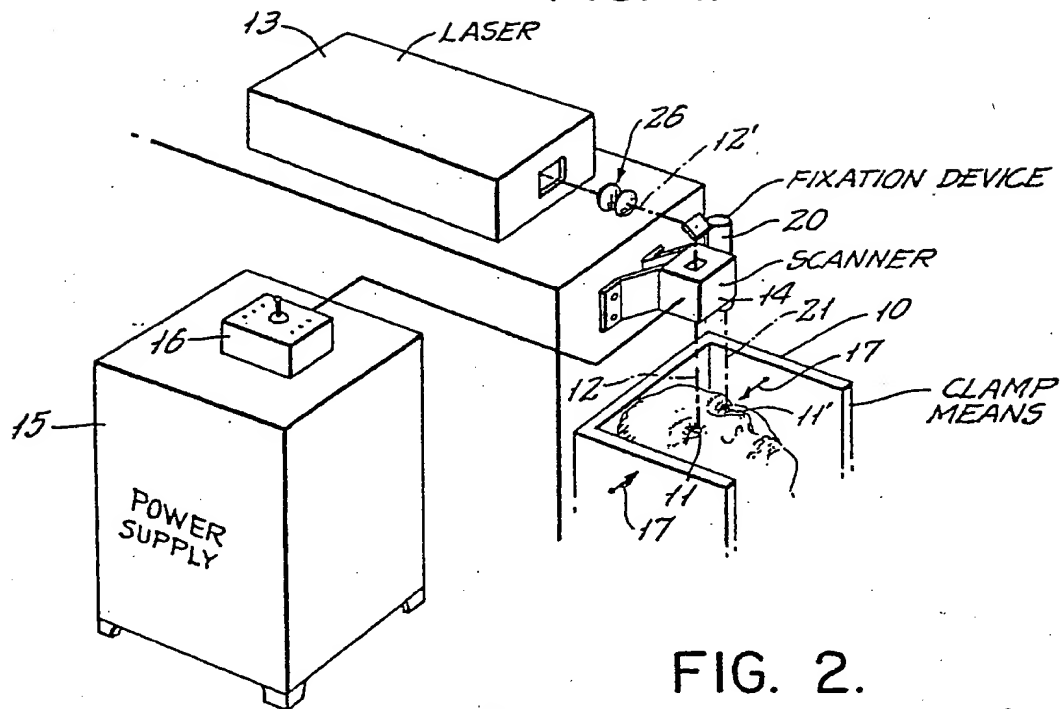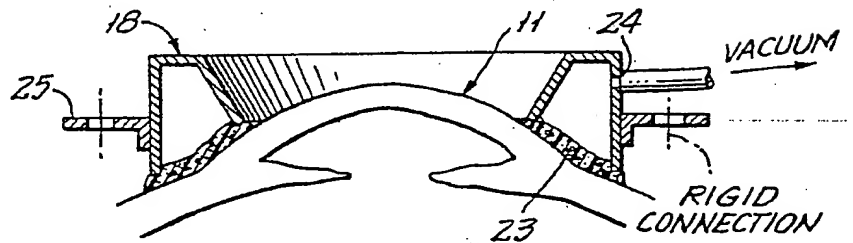correcting new curvature is imparted to the cornea
within said area.

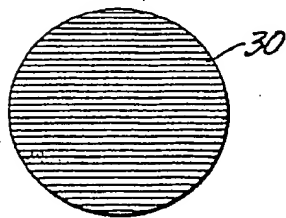25.   The method of using a scan-deflectable
pulsed ultraviolet laser beam to selectively ablate
the external surface of a cornea, which comprises
focusing the laser beam to an elemental spot size
5   which is but a small fraction of the area of the
cornea to be subjected to ablation, adjusting the
beam-exposure flux per pulse to a level at which
resultant corneal-tissue ablation per pulse is to
an ascertained elemental depth which is but a fraction
10   of desired maximum ablation into the stroma region of
the cornea, and scanning said area in a pattern to
impact the cornea with least density of pulses per
unit area at the optical center and with pulse density
increasing smoothly with increasing radius to the
15   perimeter of said area, whereby a hyperopia-correcting
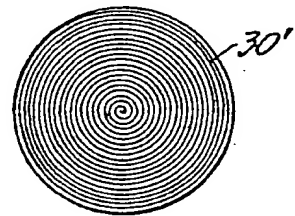new curvature is imparted to the cornea within said
area.

FIG. 1.

13 — LASER

26 12'

FIXATION DEVICE

20

SCANNER

16

14 21 10

17

15

12

11'

CLAMP
MEANS

11

17

POWER
SUPPLY

FIG. 2.

18 11 24

VACUUM

25

23

RIGID
CONNECTION

FIG. 3.

30

FIG. 4.

30'

FIG. 5.

32 31

FIG. 6.

34 33

FIG. 7.

FIG. 9.

FIG. 8.

FIG. II.

FIG. IO.

FIG. 12.

POSTERIOR
CORNEAL
SURFACE AXIS   1   2   mm RADIUS 3
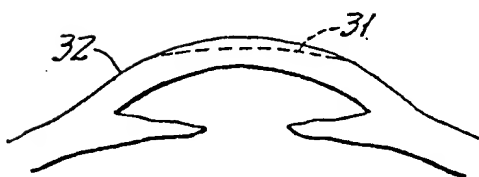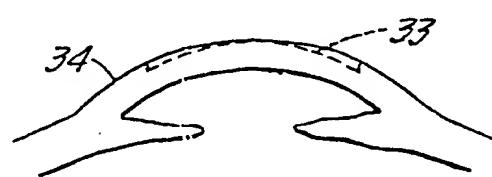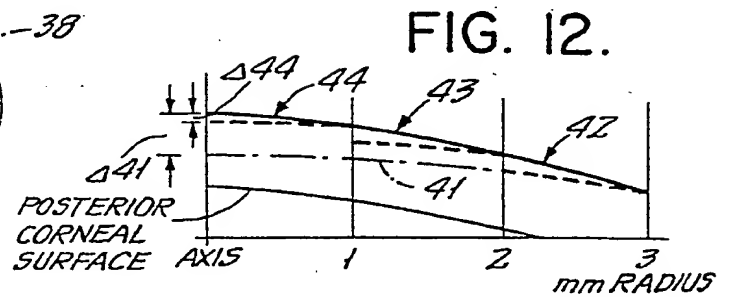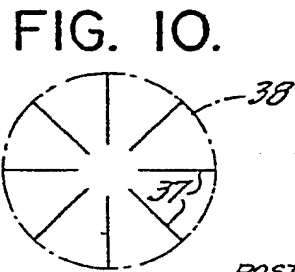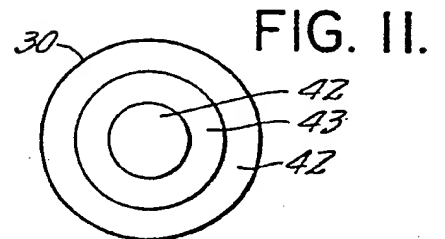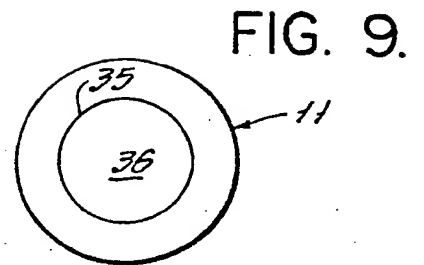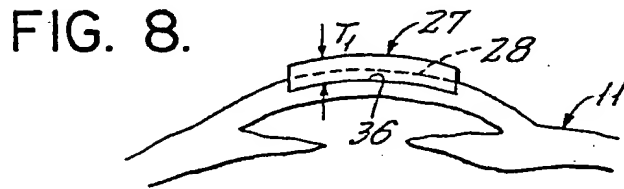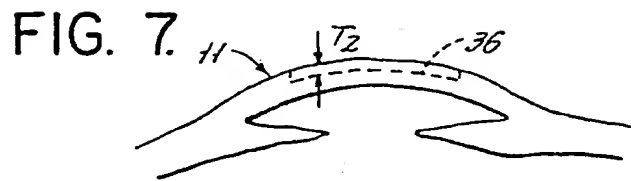
TO LASER
PULSING
CONTROL

EXCITER
ENABLE/
DISABLE

FIG. 13

ENVELOPE
LIMITER

X-SCAN

Y-SCAN

X-RATE
PROFILE

Y-RATE
PROFILE

FIG. 14.

RADIUS
SCAN

POLAR
RASTER

AZIMUTH
DRIVE